(c) whether Reserve Bank of India was approached for merger of Federal Bank and Lord Krishna Bank;

(d) if so, the details including the decision taken/to be taken on the above proposal; and

(e) the details of proposals if any and decision taken/to be taken for the merger of PSU banks till date, category-wise?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI S. S. PALANIMANICKAM): (a) and (b) Reserve Bank of India has issued guidelines on merger and amalgamation between private sector banks and of NBFCs with private sector banks on 11th May, 2005 which are available on RBI website *www.rbi.org.in.*

(c) and (d) RBI has not received any application for voluntary merger under Section 44Aof Banking regulation Act, 1949 for merger of Federal Bank and Lord Krishna Bank.

(e) No proposal has, so far, been received for merger of public sector banks.

Housing loans to persons below poverty line

†1401. PROF. ALKA BALRAM KSHATRIYA: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state;

(a) whether Government have formulated any outlines of a special scheme for providing loans for housing to the people living below poverty line;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the details of the loan disbursed to poor people by the banks during the last three years till date;

(c) if not, the reasons therefor and Government's reaction thereto; and

(d) the steps taken by the Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI S. S. PALANIMANICKAM): (a) to (d) No, Sir. However, the Indira Awas Yojana and Credit-cum-Subsidy Scheme (CCSS) for Rural Housing provide for grants-in-aid for construction of dwelling units to members of

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribes, Freed Bonded Labourers and non SC/STs living below the poverty line in rural areas.

Credit to Small and Medium Enterprises

1402. SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA:
SHRI K.B. KRISHNA MURTHY:

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the provisions of the recent policy package for stepping up credit to Small and Medium Enterprises sector enforceable;

(b) whether the said provisions are applicable for private sector banks too;

(c) if not, the reasons therefor; and

(d) what steps are being taken to bring the private banks under the purview of the policy packages?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI S.S. PALANIMANICKAM): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The provisions of the recent policy package on stepping up credit to SME sector are enforceable by Reserve Bank of India. However, the one time settlement scheme for small scale non performing accounts (NPA) announced under the policy package is applicable to public sector banks only.

(c) and (d) Do not arise.

Joint Study Group with Russia

1403. SHRI JESUDASU SEELAM:
DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY:

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether in an attempt to further strengthen relationship, India and Russia will set up a joint study group to explore possibilities of a comprehensive economic co-operation agreement;

(b) if so, whether while identifying banking and technology sectors as drivers of bilateral relationship with Russia, there was a need to ensure that issues of business visas did not hamper growth;